



**Testimony of Ted Doolittle
Office of the Healthcare Advocate
Before the Human Services Committee
Re HB 6616
February 14, 2023**

Good afternoon, Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest, Senator Seminara, Representative Case, and members of the Human Services Committee. For the record, I am Ted Doolittle, Healthcare Advocate for the State of Connecticut. The Office of the Healthcare Advocate (“OHA”) is an independent state agency with a consumer-focused mission: assuring consumers have access to medically necessary healthcare; educating consumers about their rights and responsibilities under health plans; assisting consumers in disputes with their health insurance carriers; and informing legislators and regulators regarding problems that consumers are facing in accessing care, and proposing solutions to those problems.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit comment in strong support of HB 6616, An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to those Ineligible due to Immigration Status. In recent years, and to its great credit, our state has recognized an important humanitarian obligation to expand access to healthcare and healthcare coverage for all children up to 12 years of age, regardless of their immigration status. In this regard, the state of Connecticut has aligned itself with other states that have acknowledged this gap in our federal Medicaid law as it pertains to children’s eligibility for medical assistance programs.

HB 6616 would take the important next step in expanding that medical assistance to immigrants up to age twenty-five. Making such coverage available to this population is not

only consistent with Connecticut's trajectory as a leader in providing its residents with access to quality and affordable healthcare, but it is also unquestionably the right thing to do. Immigrants are a vital part of our community, and deserve access to affordable health care.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this testimony on this very important topic. If you have any questions concerning our position on this issue, please feel free to contact me at Ted.Doolittle@ct.gov.